

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 8-10 without prejudice or disclaimer.

REMARKS

Claims 1-7 are pending herein.

(1) Applicant affirm the election of claims 1-7 for further prosecution. Non-elected claims 8-10 have been cancelled.

(5) Claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph on the grounds that the disclosure is not enabling. This rejection is traversed.

The Examiner has mis-applied §112, first paragraph. A rejection of the claims under this section is appropriate where the claims recite an element not disclosed in the specification. That is not the case here. In fact, the disclosure fully enables a person of ordinary skill in the art to practice the invention. The Examiner contends that displacing means for the valve pin are essential to the invention and thus must be included in the claims. Applicant notes that the displacing means are recited in dependent claim 2. These means are the valve actuating device 32 shown in Figs. 3-5. However, these means need not be recited in parent claim 1. For example, it is conceivable that the valve pin 30 could be manually displaced between the first, second and third positions recited in claim 1. The displacing means are not critical. It is only necessary that the valve pin be operable between the various positions as presently claimed.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-7 under §112, first paragraph, is respectfully requested.

(2) Claims 1 -7 were rejected by the Examiner under §103(a) as being unpatentable over the Shannon et al U.S. patent No. 6,422,850 in view of the Inoue U.S. patent No. 5,849,237.

Shannon et al discloses a golf ball injection mold having a non-circular vent pin 28 so that the dimple formed at the pole of the ball by the pin will be non-circular. This is important in the formation of golf balls having all non-circular dimples. The vent pin is operable between three positions: a retracted position (Fig 2A) to allow air to escape during the mold filling process; a normal closed position (Fig. 2B) to allow for curing the thermoplastic; and a fully extended position (Fig. 2C) for ejecting the ball from the mold. Shannon et al also discloses retractable core support pins 12, 20 to position and hold the golf ball core in the center of the cavity while the thermoplastic enters the mold. Shannon et al does not disclose or suggest a valve pin which is operable to control the flow of thermoplastic material into the cavity during injection molding of a golf ball as in the claimed invention. Rather, Shannon et al uses a network of runners 16 and gates 18 at the equator of the golf ball which deliver thermoplastic material to the cavities of the mold.

It appears as though the Examiner has mistaken the valve pin 30 of the claimed invention with the vent pin 20 of Shannon et al. While Shannon's vent pin is operable between three positions, the positions are different because of the different functions provided by the pin in each position. The vent pin in the claimed invention is the pin 34 in the lower mold half. It is a two-position pin. In its extended position (Fig. 3), it allows air to exit the cavity while thermoplastic material enters. In its closed position (Figs. 4 and 5), it seals the cavity at the bottom during the final filling of the cavity and during curing. The vent pin of the invention is not used to eject the ball from the mold since that is accomplished by the core pins 16. See page 6, lines 21-25.

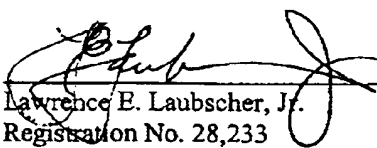
The Examiner contends that Inoue discloses a retractable core pin that is also capable of ejecting a molded golf ball. Applicant agrees. However, this adds nothing to the shortfalls of Shannon et al. That is, combining the teachings of Inoue with Shannon et al will still not result in a valve structure as in the claimed invention wherein the thermoplastic material supply valve (which is not even present in Shannon et al or in Inoue) is operable to control the supply of thermoplastic material to the golf ball mold.

In an obviousness analysis, the differences between the claimed invention and the cited references are to be ascertained. Neither reference cited by the Examiner discloses a valve pin, much less a valve pin operable between three different positions to both support a golf ball core and control the supply of thermoplastic material to the mold as claimed. Thus for all the foregoing reasons, Shannon et al and Inoue, either alone or in combination, do not disclose or suggest applicant's invention as recited in claims 1-7. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-7 under §103(a) are respectfully requested.

Allowance of claims 1-7 is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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